

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

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P R 181101Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2238

INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 23243

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJ: CODEL MANSFIELD VISIT TO THAILAND

SUMMARY. DURING HIS ONE FULL DAY IN BANGKOK SENATOR MANSFIELD MET SUCCESSIVELY WITH FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHAIRATTAKUN, PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT, HAD AUDIENCE WITH KING PHUMIPHON AND WAS ENTERTAINED AT DINNER BY FOREIGN MINISTER IN THE EVENING. PRINCIPAL TOPICS DISCUSSED IN MEETINGS WITH THAI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WERE: FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA, FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE U.S. AND CERTAIN SUBJS WITHIN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR SUCH AS POTENTIAL AMERICAN USURPATION OF TRADITIONAL THAI RICE MARKETS. END SUMMARY.

1. SENATOR MANSFIELD ARRIVED IN BANGKOK AT 1215 AUG 16 AND WENT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY INTO AN INTENSIVE SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH VARIOUS THAI OFFICIALS AS WELL AS HIS MAJESTY KING PHUMIPHON. IN THE FIRST OF THESE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER RECOUNTED BRIEFLY FOR THE SENATOR DETAILS OF HIS RECENT TRIP TO HANOI AND VIENTIANE AS HEAD OF THE RTG DELEGATION CHARGED WITH NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THESE TWO SOUTHEAST ASIAN NEIGHBORS. SENATOR MANSFIELD SAID THAT HE WAS DELIGHTED THAT THAILAND WAS TAKING THESE INITIATIVES TO ESTABLISH SOUND RELATIONS WITH THESE NEIGHBORS, AND THAT SUCH MOVES WERE OBVIOUSLY IN THE THAI NATIONAL INTEREST..

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SENATOR THEN ASKED ABOUT RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA AND PHICHAIR

DESCRIBED BRIEFLY HIS EARLIER VISIT TO THAT COUNTRY AND THE LIAISON ARRANGEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AT THE BORDER CROSSING POINT OF ARANYAPRATHET/POIPET. THE SENATOR ASKED FOR ANY RECENT INFORMATION THE THAI MIGHT HAVE REGARDING PRINCE SIHANOUK AND HIS WHEREABOUTS. PHICHAIR REPLIED THAT IENG SARY HAD TOLD HIM THAT THE PRINCE WAS IN CAMBODIA "RESTING." PHICHAIR HAD SEEN PRESS REPORTS THAT SIHANOUK MIGHT HAVE ENTERED A MONASTERY BUT HE WAS INCLINED TO DISCOUNT THEM.

2. PHICHAIR ASKED ABOUT THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SENATOR PROVIDED HIM WITH A BRIEF STATUS REPORT ON THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES. HE WENT ON TO POINT OUT HOWEVER THAT REGARDLESS OF WHO MIGHT WIN IN NOV THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE U.S. VIS-A-VIS ASIA WILL PROBABLY NOT BE FUNDAMENTALLY ALTERED IN ANY IMPORTANT WAY. UNTIL NOV, HOWEVER, THE USG WOULD NOT BE TAKING ANY MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS.

3. MANSFIELD THEN ASKED ABOUT SEATO, OBSERVING THAT THE ONLY COUNTRY FOR WHICH THE TREATY HAD ANY CONTINUING RELEVANCE WAS THAILAND. THE SENATOR WENT ON TO OPINE THAT THE VARIOUS OTHER MEMBERS OF SEATO WERE OBVIOUSLY LOSING INTEREST IN THE ORGANIZATION AND HE WONDERED WHETHER OR NOT THE TREATY HAD ANY FURTHER USEFULNESS. PHICHAIR INDICATED THAT THAILAND WAS STILL INTERESTED IN THE MANILA PACT AS IT APPLIED TO THAILAND. (THIS POINT WAS STRONGLY REEMPHASIZED IN THE SENATOR'S LATER MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WHO SAID "I AM STILL KEEN ON SEATO.")

4. SENATOR MANSFIELD THEN RETURNED TO THE SUBJECT OF THAI RELATIONS WITH ITS INDOCHINESE NEIGHBORS. HE SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY HOPED THAT THERE WOULD BE A NORMALIZING OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THESE COUNTRIES AFTER THE ELECTIONS. HE INDICATED IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT ALL THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE REGION FORGET THE PAST AND PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THERE WOULD BE NO FURTHER U.S. INTERVENTIONS ON THE ASIAN MAINLAND AND HE ADVISED THE FOREIGN MINISTER THAT THE THAI MUST ACCOMMODATE WITH EVENTS AS THEY ARE DEVELOPING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND "BEND WITH THE WIND." PHICHAIR SAID THAT IN THEIR MEETINGS WITH NGUYEN DUY TRINH IN HANOI THE VIETNAMESE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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ALSO MADE FREQUENT REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE, PARTICULARLY WHEN DISCUSSING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES IN THE COMMUNIQUE NORMALIZING RELATIONS.

5. THE SENATOR THEN REFERRED TO ASEAN IN MOST FAVORABLE TERMS EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT BURMAN AND THE INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME PART OF THE GROUPING. HE FELT IT HAD GREAT POTENTIAL AS AN ECONOMIC UNION BUT NOT CERTAINLY AS A

MILITARY BLOC.

6. IN RESPONSE TO FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHA'S QUESTION AS TO THE TIMING OF THE NORMALIZATION OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM, SENATOR MANSFIELD SAID IT WAS CONTINGENT ON THE REQUIREMENT THAT HANOI PROVIDE INFORMATION ON MIAS AND ALSO THAT HANOI DROP ITS CLAIM FOR REPARATIONS FROM THE U.S. HE SAID THAT HANOI CONTENDED THAT FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON HAD PROMISED \$3.5 BILLION IN AID AS PART OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND IT ALLEGED THAT DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE EXISTED CONFIRMING THIS PROMISE. WHETHER THIS WAS OR WAS NOT TRUE, IN MANSFIELD'S VIEW, IT CERTAINLY WAS NOT A BINDING OBLIGATION OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

7. SENATOR MANSFIELD NEXT WENT TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE WHERE HE MET WITH PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT. (FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHA ALSO ASSISTED AT THIS MEETING.) AFTER AN EXCHANGE OF AMENITIES, SENATOR MANSFIELD OPENED THE DISCUSSION BY STATING THAT IT WAS A GENERAL IMPRESSION IN THE UNITED STATES THAT THE ASEAN GROUP WAS BECOMING A VIABLE ENTITY AND HELD OUT THE PROMISE OF FRUITFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE NATIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

8. THE SENATOR THEN ASKED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN NORTHEAST THAILAND WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE REFUGEE SITUATION. AFTER A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF BYPLAY BETWEEN THE THAI PRINCIPALS THE SENATOR WAS PROVIDED FIGURES ON NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WITH A BREAKDOWN BY ETHNIC GROUP.

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CINCPAC HONOLULU

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9. SENATOR MANSFIELD THEN WENT ON TO COMPLIMENT THE PRIME MINISTER ON HIS GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ITS INDOCHINESE NEIGHBORS. HE STATED THAT THE US WAS SYMPTATETIC TO THAI PROBLEMS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FACT THAT PROPINQUITY REQUIRED THE WORKING OUT OF A MODUS VIVENDI WITH VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS. HE ASSURED THE PRIMIN THAT THE US HELD ITS RELATIONS WITH THAILAND IN HIGH ESTEEM AND THAT THERE WAS EVERY EXPECTATION THAT THEY WOULD BE AS SOUND IN THE FUTURE AS THEY HAD BEEN IN THE PAST.

10. THE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO SEATO WHERE SENI MADE HIS STATEMENT QUOTED ABOVE. AS HE HAD NOTED EARLIER, THE SENATOR AGAIN OBSERVED THAT THE OTHER MEMBERS OF SEATO SEEMED LESS KEEN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT GIVEN THE FACT THAT THAILAND WAS THE ONE MEMBER FOR WHICH THE MANILA PACK HAD CONTINUING RELEVANCE HE UNDERSTOOD THE PRIMIN'S INTEREST IN CONTINUATION OF SEATO.

11. THE CONVERSATION THEN SHIFTED TO THE THAI ECONOMY AND THE FORMIN INTERJECTED THE POINT REGARDING US EXPORTS OF RICE TO COUNTRIES WHICH HAD BEEN IN THE PAST TRADITIONAL MARKETS FOR THAI RICE. THE SENATOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS WAS INDEED AN IMPORTANT QUESTION AND HE WAS GLAD THE FONMIN HAD RAISED IT. THE WHOLE PROBLEM OF DISLOCATIONS OF TRADITIONAL MARKETS FOR THE EXPORT OF PRIMARY FOODSTUFFS WAS A MATTER OF CONCERN. THE FONMIN SAID THAT THAILAND WAS PRESENTLY EXPORTING CLOSE TO A MILLION TONS OF RICE ANNUALLY, PRIMARILY TO HONG KONG, CONFIDENTIAL

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INDIA, SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA. THEY WERE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT US PL-480 SHIPMENTS TO VARIOUS ASIAN COUNTRIES WERE GIVING UNFAIR COMPETITION TO THAI SHIPPERS. THE SENATOR PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER ON HIS RETURN TO WASHINGTON, POINTING OUT HOWEVER THAT THE PROBLEM WAS A COMPLICATED ONE. THE SENATOR DID OBSERVE IN PASSING THAT HE WONDERED WHERE INDONESIA AND BANGLADESH WOULD FIND FOREIGN EXCHANGE TO BUY LARGER QUANTITIES OF THAI RICE. FROM THE FONMIN'S REPLY IT SEEMED CLEAR THAT HE FELT THAT FOREIGN ASSISTANCE TO THESE NATIONS IN SOME FORM OTHER THAN PL-480 RICE WOULD ENABLE THEM TO FIND OR GENERATE THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE REQUIRED.

12. DISCUSSION THEN TURNED TO THE PROBLEM OF DRUGS AND THE PRIMIN INFORMED THE SENATOR THAT THEY ESTIMATED THAT THERE WERE NOW HALF A MILLION ADDICTS IN THAILAND, AND THAT THE DRUG PROBLEM WAS INDEED A MATTER OF CONCERN AND FIRST PRIORITY FOR HIS GOVERNMENT. SENATOR MANSFIELD RETURNED AGAIN TO THE SUBJECT OF ASEAN, EXPRESSING THE HOPE THAT BURMA AND THE COUNTRIES OF INDOCHINA COULD BE ADMITTED TO THAT ORGANIZATION. THE PRIMIN AGREED THAT THIS WOULD BE A FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT

AS LONG AS THOSE GOVERNMENTS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PROMOTING THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE ORGANIZATION AND WOULD NOT TRY TO SABOTAGE IT.

13. THE SENATOR THEN ASKED ABOUT THE AIRCRAFT THAT HAD COME INTO THAILAND FROM VIETNAM AT THE TIME OF THE FALL OF SAIGON AND HANOI'S CLAIMS TO THEM. THE FONMIN SAID THAT THE THAI DELEGATION HAD INDEED BEEN PRESSED BY HANOI ON THIS POINT BUT THE THAI HAD HELF CONSISTENTLY TO THE POSITION THAT THIS WAS A MATTER TO BE DECIDED BETWEEN HANOI AND WASHINGTON AND UNTIL SUCH A DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN THE THAI GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BECOME INVOLVED. HE ASSURED PHAN HIEN IN HANOI THAT THE THAI WOULD HEW TO THIS LINE AND IT WAS THEREFORE FUTILE FOR HANOI TO PRESS THE ISSUE.

14. THE SENATOR THEN ASKED ABOUT THE INSURGENCY AND WAS PROVIDED A BRIEF RUNDOWN OF THREE AREAS OF ACTIVITY: THE NORTH, THE NORTHEAST AND THE MALAYSIAN BORDER. HE THEN ASKED ABOUT OIL EXPLORATION IN THE ANDAMAN SEA AND THE GULF OF SIAM AND WAS PROVIDED A BRIEF RESUME BY SECRETARY TO THE PRIMIN, NITIPHAT CHALICHAN, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT AT THE MEETING. THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GIST OF THE REPLY WAS THAT THERE WERE HOPEFUL SIGNS THAT NATURAL GAS WAS PRESENT IN COMMERCIAL QUANTITIES BUT AS YET NO GUARANTEE THAT PETROLEUM WAS PRESENT IN THE ANDAMAN SEA. ASKED ABOUT THE STATE OF THAILAND'S BALANCE OF PAYMENTS ACCOUNT, THE PRIMIN REPLIED THAT THE ECONOMY WAS SOUND, THAT THE BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION WAS LIKELY TO BE FAVORABLE THIS YEAR AND THAT IF THE UNCERTAINTY OF OIL PRICING COULD BE ELIMINATED FROM THE EQUATION, THAILAND WOULD BE IN EXCELLENT SHAPE.

15. FOLLOWING HIS MEETING WITH THE PRIMIN, THE SENATOR AND THE AMBASSADOR PROCEEDED TO THE PALACE FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH HIS MAJESTY THE KING. THE SENATOR'S AUDIENCE WITH THE KING COVERED PHILOSOPHICAL RATHER THAN TOPICAL SUBJECTS. THE KING HELD FORTH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITION, ON THE NEED FOR CONSTANT EVOLUTIONARY CHANGE AND ON THE DIVERSITY OF MAN. HE ALSO DESCRIBED HIS EFFORTS TO STIMULATE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COOPERATION AND THROUGH RAPID ACTION ON IRRIGATION PROJECTS. ALTHOUGH HE PRESUMABLY KNEW OF PRAPHAT'S REPORTED RETURN HE NEVER ALLUDED TO IT EVEN OBLIQUELY. (THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT COMMENTS BY THE KING ON THE DANGER OF EXTREMISM FROM THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT WERE MORE BALANCED AND CALM THAN RECENT ROYAL REMARKS WHICH HAVE EXCLUSIVELY STRESSED THE THREAT OF THE MILITANT LEFT.) WHITEHOUSE

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